



Questions and Answers About the 2002 Economic Census

Businesses across the Nation received their 2002 Economic Census forms in December. The forms are due February 12, 2003.

Why does the government take the Economic Census?

Good public policy depends on accurate information. The Economic Census provides official measures of output for industries and geographic areas. Economic policy makers in federal, state and local governments use Economic Census data to project trends, guide economic development, and assess the impact of economic policy. Economic Census data also help build the foundation for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other indicators of economic performance.

Can businesses use Economic Census results?

Businesses large and small use census statistics to develop plans, locate facilities, define markets, gauge the competition, attract investment, manage sales, and assess efficiency. Business reporters, industry associations, and economic analysts use census statistics to assess industry growth and change, prepare business forecasts, define legislative priorities, and produce educational materials. Economic Census data help businesses compare industries and locations, and provide the official information that many investors expect in a business plan.

Why do we need an Economic Census when surveys provide more timely figures?

The Economic Census provides comprehensive details about the United States economy, from the National to the local level. Surveys — like Retail Sales — provide timely information about particular industries or sectors. Since surveys are based on samples that include only a small fraction of all businesses, they can't supply the geographic and other details that are unique to the census.

Economic Census data about industries, their inputs and outputs, and how they relate to each other, are available nowhere else. Census totals also serve as benchmarks to keep our surveys accurate.

What's new about the 2002 Economic Census?

New questions for many industries will help us measure profound changes in the way American companies do business — leased employment, supply chain functions and outsourcing, and e-commerce sales.

Can businesses use their computers to report?

Yes! Businesses have the option to report electronically, either through the Internet or by computer diskette.

Are 2002 Economic Census forms easier to complete?

All forms have been redesigned to be easier to read, complete, and file. There more than 600 variants of the census form, so most businesses will receive forms that are as relevant as possible to their particular industries and business operations.

A toll-free "help line" (1-800-233-6136) is available 12 hours a day to answer questions that recipients have about filling out the forms.

An Internet-based "Business Help Desk" (www.census.gov/econhelp) is provided to answer many business questions and provide services that businesses often request.

Are business responses to the Economic Census kept confidential?

Yes! Business answers are protected by Federal law — Title 13, United States — under penalty of fines or imprisonment. Individual responses are seen only by persons sworn to uphold the confidentiality of Census Bureau information and may be used only for statistical purposes. Confidential information on census forms are even exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. No business competitors can obtain the responses of another company, and even copies retained in respondents' files are immune from legal process.

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How do businesses get picked for the Census?

Economic Census forms were sent to all but the smallest businesses in every industry and geographic area of the U.S. Most businesses with five or more paid employees, and a sample of smaller ones, received a census form.

What is the penalty for not responding?

Section 224 of the census law (Title 13, United States Code) provides for penalties of up to \$500 for failure to report, and \$10,000 for intentionally providing false information.

What should a business person do if his or her business did not receive an Economic Census form?

Nothing. To reduce the burden on American businesses, the Census Bureau did not send Economic Census forms to most very small firms. Forms went to all mid-sized and large businesses, but only to a sample of the smallest. If a company has more than one location, all forms were sent to the company headquarters. If the headquarters has all the required figures, managers at individual offices may never see a census form.

A few industries are not covered by the Economic Census — agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; schools and colleges; and labor, political, and religious organizations.

When and how will people see the results of the 2002 Economic Census?

The first census results will be available in early 2004 when the "Advance" report provides totals for all economic sectors right at the start. All census results will be issued on the Internet and on CD-ROM over a 2-year period.

What other information can I get on the Internet?

www.census.gov/econ2002 contains:

- ◆ samples of every 2002 Economic Census form
- ◆ publication titles and release schedules
- ◆ geographic profiles and complete reports from the 1997 Economic Census.
- ◆ more story ideas

How can I help?

Write articles for your publication to inform your business readers — in December, when forms are arriving in the mail; in January, when businesses should be working on their forms; and in February, when the forms are due. Sample articles are included in this kit.

Publish an editorial noting the value of the Economic Census for your industry or area, and urging businesses to get their forms in on time. Key messages are included in this kit.

Ask your advertising manager to run one or more public service advertisements. Camera-ready ad slicks are provided in this kit. Digital versions of the ads and more sizes are available on the web <www.census.gov/2002promo>. We will provide new ads for February and March, 2003. If you have special requirements, contact us at the address below.

Please send us a copy of any issues of your periodical that feature advertising, stories or editorials related to the 2002 Economic Census to:

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